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May 13, 2003

**TO:** Each Supervisor

**FROM:** Thomas L. Garthwaite, M.D.  
Director and Chief Medical Officer

Jonathan E. Fielding, M.D., M.P.H.  
Director of Public Health and Health Officer

**SUBJECT: PROPOSED REVISIONS TO FOOD FACILITY GRADING PROGRAM**

In the past several months, the Department's Public Health unit has been considering the possibility of adding the actual numerical score to the grade card for food facilities (restaurants and markets). The reason for considering this change was to provide more information to the consumer. The actual scores are already available on the DHS website and on the inspection reports available at each food facility.

As we do with all proposed changes, we discussed this with industry groups and, informally, with several of your offices. Based on the feedback we have received, we do not intend to make this recommendation to the Board at this time.

Since 1998, Public Health has sought to assure that inspection standards are clear to the operators and inspectors and that the inspections are consistent across the various districts and from inspector to inspector. A Quality Assurance unit and an ombudsperson unit were created in order to enhance the consistency and replicability of the inspections. One of the ways we have sought to standardize inspections is to have a supervisor or quality assurance staff person accompany an inspector to a food facility and do a side by side inspection, comparing notes to assure consistency and accuracy. These side-by-side inspections have occurred approximately once per year per inspector and have been augmented by other reviews of each inspector's work.

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Environmental Health now proposes to increase the frequency of these inspections to once per quarter per inspector. Pilots were conducted in several district offices and the results were promising. It is understood that food facilities at which these side-by-side inspections are conducted may feel that they are subjected to greater scrutiny, but these inspections will still constitute less than 1.5 percent of all inspections.

We will continue to review ways to improve the program, including methods to assure consumers have information on the results of inspections.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please let either of us know.

TLG:JEF:lm

c: Chief Administrative Officer  
County Counsel  
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisor